

**Email from Workforce Planning Branch to Human Resource and OH&S Contacts in Health Regions and Regulatory Bodies:
June 11, 2009**

Please find below information on the H1N1 virus in Saskatchewan.

Earlier today the World Health Organization set its pandemic alert to Phase Six and has indicated that the virus is causing generally moderate illness globally. Phase Six is declared when there is evidence of sustained community spread of the virus in more than one continental region.

It is important to understand that the Phase 6 declaration is based on the spread of the virus, and not on the severity of the illness it causes. The WHO has indicated the H1N1 virus is causing generally moderate illness globally and most cases recover at home without medical treatment.

The change in the World Health Organization's phase level will not affect activities in Saskatchewan as we continue to monitor the situation and continue our planning and preparations with all levels of government and health regions.

In Saskatchewan, as of yesterday we have 221 confirmed cases of H1N1 flu. We are continuing to update the numbers and post them on the Ministry of Health website on Monday, Wednesday and Fridays. To date, Saskatchewan cases have only experienced mild or moderate illness.

The H1N1 influenza strain appears to have symptoms similar to a typical seasonal flu. We know that H1N1 is circulating in the community and we will continue enhanced surveillance through the summer with regular random testing. We continue to encourage all residents to practice best infection control measures.

We remain vigilant, but are now asking only residents who develop moderate influenza symptoms to see their health professional.

If individuals are generally feeling unwell, stay home and use best infection control techniques to prevent the spread to others.

- Cover your cough and sneeze
- Wash your hands with soap and water often

If there is any action required, residents would be notified as soon as possible. People with questions or concerns about their own health are encouraged to call HealthLine at 1-877-800-0002.

Public health officials in Saskatchewan continue to be in close communication with federal and provincial public health colleagues and regional medical health officers, preparing our pandemic response.

I also want to share some information on what is happening in Manitoba. As you may be aware, Manitoba has experienced an increased concentration of patients with severe respiratory illness admitted to intensive care units, which is higher in number than previous influenza outbreaks.

While there is variation in severity of symptoms in different communities, it appears that in some of Manitoba's northern aboriginal communities there is increased severity of illness.

Saskatchewan is responding to the Manitoba situation by increasing surveillance of influenza-like illness among aboriginal populations in the three northern regional health authorities.

We are in contact with the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, Health Canada and the Northern Intertribal Health Authority and we are monitoring the health of in northern Saskatchewan communities very closely.